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Early morning fire destroys Town of Grafton residence; fund established at bank to help uninsured family

Authorities are investigating the cause of a fire that destroyed a Town of Grafton home early last Friday.

Firefighters were called to 2276 Maple Rd. at 4:35 a.m. after receiving a 911 call from a neighboring residence and spent several hours battling a blaze that forced two occupants to flee.

According to an Ozaukee County sheriff's report, one of the residents, Jerry Norberg, 58, saw heavy smoke in the basement of the house. After awakening his sister-in-law, Elaine Norberg, 74, and helping her get outside, he ran to two nearby residences to report the fire.

Neither of the Norbergs was injured.

Grafton Fire Chief John Place said his department responded to the scene along with firefighters and rescue crews from several other area communities.

When he arrived, Place said, flames were visible in the one-story house, which has an exposed basement. Firefighters vented the roof to clear smoke and tried to enter the front of the building but were forced back because the floor collapsed, he said.

"As long as all the occupants were out, we remained outside and were able to work through the windows and the rear entrance," Place said. "The exterior of the house was put out pretty quickly."

A third resident of the home, Jerry's brother George Norberg, left for work Friday before the fire broke out.

Place said the blaze may have started in or around a clothes dryer in the basement. “It appears to have been electrical, but nothing has been determined,” he said.

A number of pets, including two cats, several birds and tropical fish, died in the fire.

Although there was one battery-operated smoke detector in the house, it was not known if it was working, Place said.

Members of the Norberg family said there is no insurance for the house, which is owned by Elaine Norberg.

To help the family with expenses, a fund has been established at Harris Bank in Grafton. Donations should be made payable to the Norberg Fire Fund.

All three residents are currently staying with relatives.

In addition to the Grafton department, firefighters from Cedarburg, Port Washington, Saukville and Mequon responded to the scene along with rescue squads from Grafton and Cedarburg.

We Energies crews, Ozaukee County deputies and Saukville police also provided assistance.

A ONE-STORY house on Maple Road in the Town of Grafton was destroyed by fire last Friday morning. Photo by Sam Arendt